



# Macrophyllum

October 2003

Newsletter of the  
**Siuslaw Chapter  
American Rhododendron Society**  
Post Office Box 1701  
Florence, OR 97439-0111

**Dear Dr. Rhody,**

Yes, we really need your help. We seem to have root rot loose in our Rhodies. We have lost 5 in about 5 years. One every year and one of my favorites is beginning to roll its leaves, according to the web the first signs of the problem. On the Web it is called phytophthora and they recommend drenching with fungicides such as subdue, truban or terrazole. Any idea who might carry this stuff? We originally took it to the extension office and he thought it was the fungus that affects the Port Orford cedars and said there was nothing we could do, but the web description sounds like what is happening with ours.

Thanks,

*Vicki*

**Dear Vicki,**

The conditions you describe could indeed be caused by phytophthora root rot. Symptoms of the disease include stunting yellowish-green leaves, branch dieback, wilting of and eventually death of the plant. Once the plant dies the leaves hang on to the branches instead of falling off. If you inspect your plants root system the roots will be destroyed (rotted) starting with the smallest roots and progressing to the larger ones.

Once the plant acquires phytophthora there is no remedy. Remove and destroy the plant. Phytophthora can remain in the soil so removal of the nearby material may be necessary if you wish to plant in the location again. Certain varieties of rhododendrons are more resistant to the disease than others. Try to choose healthy, resistant plants.

Root rot seems to occur most often when the weather is very warm and the plant's root system gets "soggy". Good drainage will definitely help prevent infection.

Good gardening!

*Dr. Rhody*

## 2004 ARS Dues

Annual ARS dues for 2004 (Individual, \$35; Family, \$40) are now payable. If you have not received your dues statement, please call Dianne Gilmour at (541) 902-1970.

## Information on rhododendrons is to be found at these net sites!

American Rhododendron Society:  
<http://www.rhododendron.org>

Rhododendron & Azalea News:  
<http://www.rhododendron.org/news/home.htm>

## Rhododendron Events

**November 6, 2003**

### Gallagher Park Work Party

Chapter work parties will help maintain the Park on the first **Thursday** of each month between 10 a.m. & noon. **Please note the new day.** WE NEED YOUR HELP! Sign up at the October meeting or call Gene Cockeram (997-2377) or Jenny Velinty (997-7573) if you have any questions.

**November 18, 2003**

### Chapter Meeting

**President:** Mike Bones  
(541) 997-3082  
<mailto:rhodies@harborside.com>

**Vice President:** Everett Hall  
(541) 997-3605

<mailto:evhall@msn.com>

**Secretary:** Kathy Bones  
(541) 997-3082  
<mailto:rhodies@harborside.com>

**Treasurer:** Dianne Gilmour  
(541) 902-1970  
<mailto:dichuck@oregonfcu.net>

### Board Members:

Jim Smith, Past President, Show Chair  
(541) 268-6821

<mailto:Rhody1@presys.com>

Dave Shepherd (04), Chapter Shirts  
(541) 997-2283

<mailto:drshepherd@oregonfast.net>

Jeannie Shields (05), Publicity  
(541) 902-8358

Karen Timmons (06)  
(541) 997-2480

<mailto:timmons@oregonfcu.com>

### Book Chairperson:

Marianne Horney  
(541) 997-6626

<mailto:maribob@oregonfast.net>

### Hospitality

Paul & Freda Ziegelmaier  
(541) 902-0584

<mailto:semperfi@presys.com>

### Newsletter:

Charles M. King  
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Paul M. Wilson

(541) 902-9780

<mailto:jpwilson@oregonfcu.com>

## OCTOBER CALENDAR

### October Board Meeting

*When:* 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday, October 14  
7 p.m.

*Where:* Mike & Kathy Bones  
90379 OR Coast Hwy

### October Chapter Meeting

*What:* Rhododendrons 101

*When:* 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday, Oct. 21  
7 p.m.

### NOTE DIFFERENT MEETING LOCATION

*Where:* Florence Middle School  
2525 Oak St.  
Florence, OR

### Pre-meeting Dinner:

ICM Restaurant at 5 p.m.

For reservations contact

Eileen McKenney at

(541) 997-2222, or

<mailto:egmc@oregonfast.net>

### Cookies

Judy Johnson, Lee May  
JoAnn Wilson

**From the VP**

The autumn rains have started - at last - and the long dry summer is over. We never had any significant summer rain this year and as a result of that many people lost plants. I've noticed that even *R. macrophyllum* that is used to summer drought, suffered from lack of moisture this year.

As you know, October here on the central Oregon coast, is "plant a rhododendron month." For most of us it is just the first of several months that are great months for planting rhododendrons and azaleas. However, the earlier in the season you can get your plants in the ground the better established they will be by spring and the less care you will have to give them next summer. One added thought, our show rules require that you must own a plant for six months before you can enter one of the trusses in our show. Rhododendrons acquired before the third week in November will qualify for entry in our May show.

I am somewhat dismayed that several of the businesses being newly landscaped in our area are not including very many, if any, rhododendrons in their planting design. It seems to me that it is in their own self-interest to support the theme of 'Florence, the City of Rhododendrons' and plant rhododendrons lavishly. After all, thousands of people come into our area during the rhododendron blooming season to admire and enjoy the beauty of these plants –and they all have money to spend.

Twenty of our Chapter members attended the Western Regional conference in seaside. The plant sale was terrific with good selections of quality plants from which to choose, and some good bargains on nice plants. The bargains were so good I observed one well-known hybridizer buying some of his own hybrids. Plants purchased at that sale qualify for entry in our April show.

At our next meeting we will again, by popular demand, have another session of Rhododendron 101. We make these presentations primarily to the novice grower, those folks who are in the beginning stages of growing these wonderful plants and want to learn how to do so successfully. We ask that those of you who are experienced growers put yourselves back into that time of your life when you were first learning and join in the fun. I always learn, or relearn, something at these sessions and, hopefully, you will too. You won't want to miss it.

**Everett Hall, Vice President**

**Secretary's Report**

The board is very excited about the coming year for the Siuslaw Chapter. It promises to be an interesting and informative journey.

The financial books were audited and given a clean bill of health by Don Chehak and then given to Dianne Gilmour, our newly elected treasurer.

The big news for the year is our change of location of our monthly general meetings. If you weren't at our September meeting, you haven't seen our new surroundings. The Siuslaw Middle School is very roomy and is proving to be just what our growing chapter needed. With the savings in money, we will be able to develop a web site for the chapter.

Jenny Velinty has suggested a new plan for working at Gallagher Park. She will have a sign up sheet similar to the cookie sign up sheet to choose the month and first Thursday most convenient for you to volunteer at the park. Everyone will have the opportunity to beautify this area.

You will be asked to tell us what your favorite rhody/azalea is. This really means which rhody, big or small does best in your garden and that you like. This list will go to a committee for their use in choosing a Rhododendron of the Year to be announced in the journal.

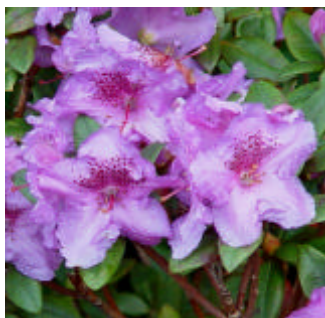
Your board has decided to offer books for sale this year at a 25% discount. This is a smaller discount than in past years, but is still a considerable savings. The money made from this activity will be used to buy books for the library or anywhere else needing education about the genus.

"Plant a Rhody Month" is upon us. October is our designated month for this event, so pass the word. Remember, the nurseries in our Chapter are offering a 10% discount to members so wear your nametag!

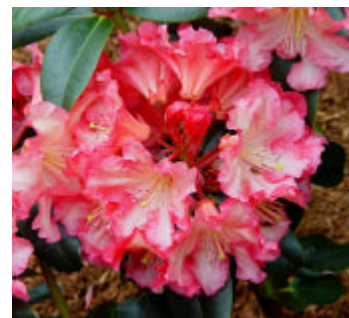
**Kathy Bones, Secretary**



**R. 'Gibraltar'**



**R. 'Lavendula'**



**R. 'Naselle'**

**New Members:**  
The Chapter welcomes new members Debbie & Pete Peterson of Florence, OR.



**Plant of the Month: *R. rigidum***

This month's species is one that goes especially well in a 'woodland' garden. *R. rigidum* was first collected in 1884 by a French missionary, Abbe' Delavey, in the Yunnan province of China; it has been in cultivation for a long time. It was later collected by Joseph Rock and several other plant explorers in the same general region of China.

In it's native home it will vary from about two feet in height to about twenty three feet tall, but in cultivation it rarely exceeds ten to twelve feet in height and many forms remain about five or six feet tall.

The leaves on *R. rigidum* are described as being elliptic (sides curving equally from tip to base, widest in the middle) or oblanceolate (base tapering, widest above the middle, length of the leaf about three times it's width). The new growth is a bluish-green color that turns into a medium green and the underside of the leaf is brownish with little scales that can be seen with a magnifying glass.

The flowers are long funnel shaped and range from in color from white through various shades of pink to a rather lilac-rose. Some plants have faint gold or brownish-red spots on the petals. Although the 'album' or white forms seem to be the most popular, I prefer the pink forms because they add more color to the garden.

There are several selected named forms of *R. rigidum* that are available for purchase and I always recommend that you acquire one of these forms if you want to be assured of getting a good plant. Plants grown from seed will, however, usually prove to be satisfactory and it's always fun to raise them.

*R. rigidum*, like most of the other species in the Triflora subsection is relatively easy to grow and it will put on a magnificent show in the spring. If you have room for a beautiful, easy to care for plant, you might want to consider *R. rigidum*.

**Everett Hall, Vice President**



## Feeding Rhodys?

In discussions of how we should fertilize rhododendrons we sometimes refer to this process as "feeding" our rhodys. Less you think that this process is analogous to visiting your favorite restaurant, it may be of interest to consider how rhododendrons actually "feed." When we fertilize rhododendrons we are providing them with those inorganic chemicals that they cannot obtain in sufficient quantities on their own. This means that we treat rhodys with mixtures that will give them nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P) in the form of phosphate, potassium (K) and smaller quantities of several metals and sulfur.

Nitrogen is required by all living things, be it animal or plant, for synthesis of most of their chemical components, protein, nucleic acids (i.e. DNA and RNA) and lipids to name a few. Although air is 79% nitrogen, animals cannot convert it to chemical forms that can be used by them. A few plants, in conjunction with associated microbes, are capable of converting atmospheric nitrogen into chemical forms that can be used by both plants and animals, a process called nitrogen fixation. Unfortunately, rhododendrons are dependent on absorbing water soluble nitrogen compounds from their roots since they are not capable of utilizing gaseous nitrogen.

Phosphate is also required for living things to synthesize DNA and RNA as well as lipids and proteins. Made up of phosphorus and oxygen in a ratio that is easily utilized by cells, phosphate is readily incorporated into these vital cellular components.

Soluble salts of potassium, potash, are utilized by plants and animals to provide appropriate ionic (i.e. salt) conditions for their cells. The extent to which potassium accumulates in plant tissues can be seen in the need for renal patients to limit their consumption of vegetable products rich in potassium; individuals on diuretics may require potassium replacement through increased intake of such things as orange juice. Perhaps the most dramatic effect of the potassium content of plant tissues is the use of wood ash to produce soft soap by boiling with animal fat. In fact, potash was produced until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century from wood ash. Soft soap consists of potassium salts of fatty acids that form when the high pH produced by the ashes splits the fat into fatty acids and glycerin. The alkaline (i.e. high pH) effects of the potassium residue in wood ash may well be something that would prompt you to limit the exposure of your rhodys to this potential.

Metallic salts and sulfur are generally required by rhododendrons in smaller quantities than nitrogen, phosphate and potassium. Calcium, magnesium and sulfur, required in somewhat larger quantities than the other metallic salts, usually have adequate levels in agricultural soils, but may need to be added to our highly acidic coastal soils. Most of the other metallic salts are involved at low concentrations in helping catalyze many of the chemical reactions of the plant rather than in the production of large quantities of structural components. These so-called "trace" elements include iron, zinc, manganese, molybdenum, boron and copper.

There are two important factors missing from the above components that distinguish plants from animals. First, fertilizers don't provide plants with a carbon source since atmospheric carbon dioxide is used for the synthesis of virtually all of their carbon containing constituents. Second, in contrast to animals that utilize food for energy, fertilizers do not give plants the energy needed for growth and survival. Plants, but not animals, use the process of photosynthesis to harness the sun's energy to convert carbon dioxide into carbohydrates that can be utilized for both energy and growth. Since photosynthesis utilizes one of our waste products, carbon dioxide, it seems only fitting that it produces something that we can use, oxygen, in the process. Carbon containing compounds derived from photosynthesis constitute the bulk of the plants mass, which is why they burn so well. Obviously, the small amount of inorganic fertilizer spread around the roots of our rhodys contributes only a minor fraction to the mass of the plant.

Humans survive only by consumption of animal and plant products that give us carbohydrates, fats and protein for the production of energy, as well as certain essential amino acids, fatty acids, vitamins and minerals that we can not synthesize. In contrast, rhodys thrive on simple inorganic elements provided by our fertilizers, but they actually grow through the combined effects of energy from sunlight and carbon from carbon dioxide. This relative nutritional independence of plants has often been exploited through hydroponic techniques that permit growth in soil-less systems. Knowledge of what plants actually utilize for optimal growth should enlighten us as to what role "organic" fertilizers might play in the cultures of our plants. It is likely that they serve best to alter the texture of the soil, retain moisture and modulate the release of their own nutrients.

In human terms, it would seem logical to regard plant fertilizers as nutritional supplements akin to vitamins and nutritional supplements rather than as calorie-laden delicacies that by themselves alone can add pounds. To carry the analogy further, you can conclude that our rhodys cannot exist on the empty calories provided by the combination of sunlight and carbon dioxide alone - they also need fertilizer to produce their fantastic foliage and eye popping trusses. As stated more explicitly by Dr. Jim Gerdemann, "We do not feed plants. They produce their own food. We fertilize them."

**Charles M. King**